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"A NATIONAL HERO."

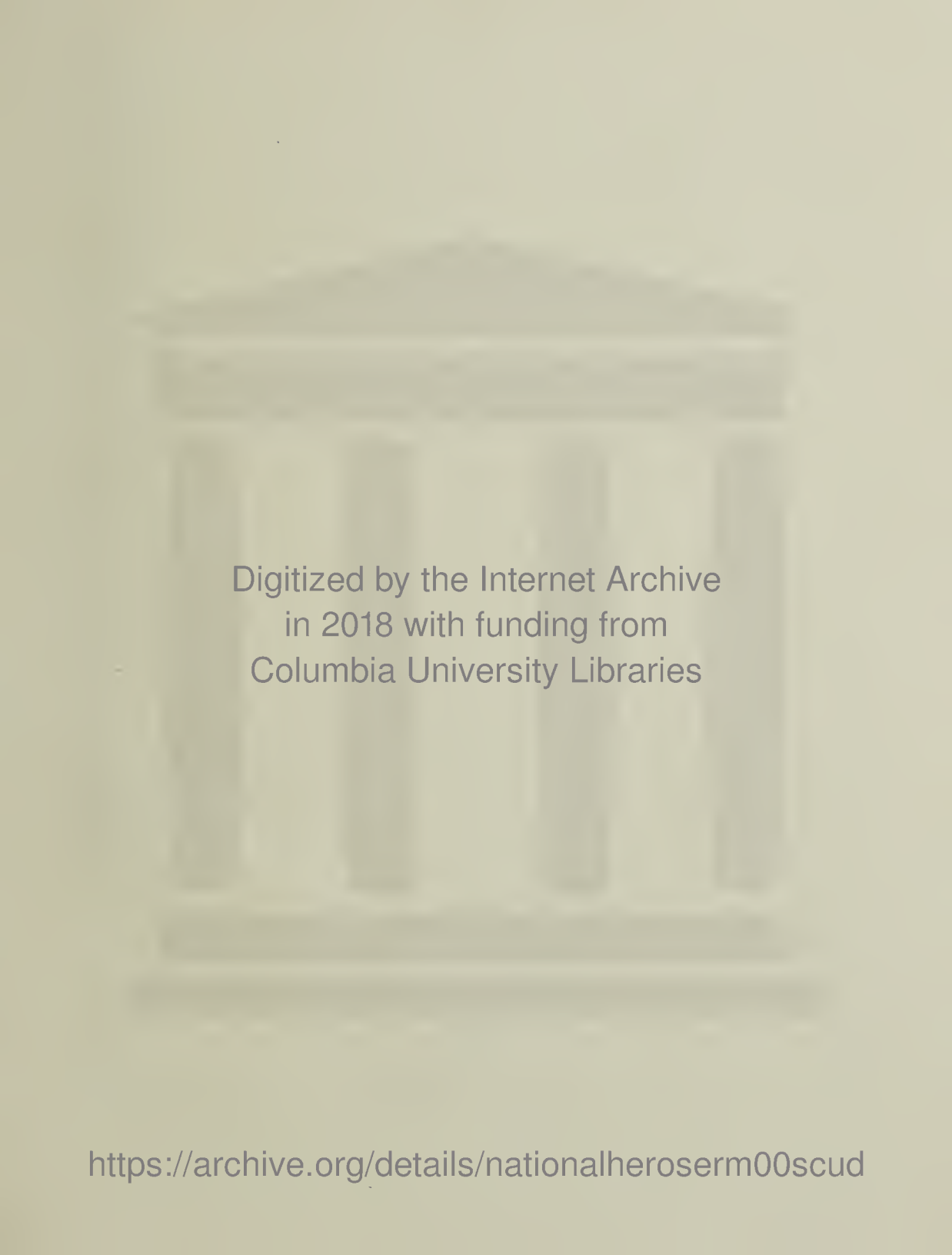
SERMON

BY

REV. DOREMUS SCUDDER.

STATUE OF MARCUS WHITMAN,

IN THE WITHERSPOON BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA, PA.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"A National Hero."

SERMON

BY

REV. DOREMUS SCUDDER,

AT THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

WOBURN, MASS..

Sunday, November twenty-eighth, 1897,

10.30 A. M.

To the Pastor of the First Cong'l Church, Woburn, Mass.

Dear Brother:

We listened on Sunday last with intense interest to your eloquent and inspiring tribute to the memory of one of the most distinguished of America's patriots and heroes, Dr. Marcus Whitman.

For ourselves and many others, we hereby express the earnest desire that an address, so admirable, may be published and remain for the encouragement of the lovers of their country and for the inspiration of the devoted servants of the Master. We therefore respectfully ask for a copy of this discourse for publication.

Sincerely yours,

Edward E. Thompson,
Abijah Thompson,
Arthur B. Wyman,
Everett P. Fox,
Alvah Buckman,
C. E. Richardson,
O. F. Bryant,
J. G. Pollard,

November 29, 1897. Deacons of the First Cong'l Church.

December 4, 1897.

Messrs. Edward E. Thompson, Abijah Thompson, Arthur B. Wyman, Everett P. Fox, Alvah Buckman, C. E. Richardson, O. F. Bryant and J. G. Pollard, Deacons of the First Church, Woburn, Mass.

Dear Brethren:

Your letter brings one more evidence of your constant kindness and generous appreciation, which always exceed my deserts, and for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. No one can be as conscious as I how inadequate to the memory of Dr. Marcus Whitman is the short sketch given last Sunday. But if it moved you, it may move others, and with the hope that it may prove helpful in leading some to study the noble lives of Dr. and Mrs. Whitman and to add their contribution to the endowment of the college at Walla Walla, I gladly place the manuscript in your hands to do with as may seem best.

Faithfully your minister,

DOREMUS SCUDDER.

A NATIONAL HERO.*

Gen. 6: 4. There were giants in the earth in those days.

Fifty-four years ago a plain man of few words but of actions that were golden, whose name some day will stand close to those of Washington and Lincoln in the history of the United States, entered the offices of the American Board in Boston to be sharply reproved for leaving his mission field to do the grandest single deed which this country has ever known. For decades his name and his deed slept in oblivion, but God never forgets his own. At New Haven last month, the largest number of corporate members ever assembled in the history of the Board, unanimously called upon every church in its constituency to set apart Sunday, November 28, for the solemn recognition of the services of this man to the Board and to his country, and decreed that on the 50th anniversary of his death, which will fall tomorrow, both at Boston the home of the society and at Washington the capital of the nation, memorial services in his honor be held and a movement be inaugurated to erect a suitable monument to commemorate his life. In loyal response

* This sermon was preached on the morning of Nov. 28, 1897. In it free use was made of the material embodied in that excellent book, "How Marcus Whitman saved Oregon."

to this summons our First Church, whose heart has always beat in time both to the most exalted patriotism and to the missionary command of Jesus Christ, dedicates this morning hour to the memory of Dr. Marcus Whitman.

In a true sense every man is *sui generis* both in his inner nature and in his outward manifestation. But there are some characters so distinctive that like the Alpine giant Matterhorn they stand out from the mass of dissimilar individuals as though they belonged to a different class. Washington was great in the very absence of such uniqueness. Like Monte Rosa, the perfect snow mountain, with her rounded dome which reaches so far above her sisters that old Sol lovingly imprints on her brow his rosy kiss while her companions stand lowly beside her in reverential shadow, the Father of His Country towers above his fellow citizens in the symmetry, the purity and the loftiness of his character. But Lincoln is your true Matterhorn, far more impressive, wondrously massive, unduplicated and unduplicable. And in this same category we must place Marcus Whitman, a strange silent being, but unspeakably precious to the lover of real men.

It was well for our land, now the home of fabulous wealth, where God has undertaken to solve the problem, how carve moneyed men into self-denying Christians, the eighteen-hundred-year-old question, how

can a rich man be saved, that the Father of this country should have been one of the largest property owners of his day. It was also singularly fitting that the emancipator of enslaved laborers should himself have risen from the dead level of hard manual toil. But a third hero was demanded. For it was impossible that the land of the Pilgrims whose typical genius for the first three hundred years after its discovery was that man of little substance but great resources, that conqueror of adverse conditions, that glorifier of brain over brawn, that creature of indomitable pluck and endless endurance, the Pioneer, should have his national exemplar. The American Pilgrim was God's man, and for God he went forth from England. Not like the hordes that come to us today, a mere emigrant, a poor, half-starved wretch crowded out of dense life in Europe to seek wider pastures farther on, not a mere wealth getter but a humble disciple of Jesus Christ, the secret of all whose wondrous achievements lay in a little well-worn book which he called Bible, who could pray as well as fight, who loved justice and righteousness, who could surrender everything he held dear at the call of his God, such has been the genus Pioneer of the United States ever since the Mayflower dropped anchor in Plymouth harbor. But where was this strange product of the Reformation to find his typical incarnation in our history? God waited for him until 1842 and then He commanded

him to enter the world of achievement in the person of Marcus Whitman. Six years before Fremont, "the Pathfinder," discovered the South Pass, the band which numbered among its members Dr. and Mrs. Whitman and Rev. and Mrs. Spalding, two bridal couples on their honeymoon, wound its way steadily up that Pass to the summit of the divide between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans and there under the folds of the flag of the free and to the music of scripture and prayer dedicated the beautiful Westland to God and to liberty. It was a solemn service pregnant with meaning for the future of that far Northwest. We have no time to sketch the long journey of more than four months across prairie and scorching plains of saleratus dust, over rushing rivers, up steep mountain sides and among hostile tribes of Indians. It is enough to know that in 1836 it took as much courage to go overland to Oregon as it did in 1620 to leave Holland for New England.

Some future historian in the 25th or 30th century will point out the fact that the story of the United States has been pre-eminently one of missions. Back in the earliest times our forefathers believed themselves God-sent for gospel purposes. In less than fifteen years after the landing at Plymouth we find John Eliot at work for his Redmen. The Harvard college charter of 1650 states as the object of that institution "the education of the English and Indian

youth of this country in knowledge and godliness.'' The narratives of the work done by heroic men and women in evangelizing the savage tribes of the United States are not surpassed in thrilling interest by any other chapter in church history. The birth of the American Board and the other great missionary agencies followed as a matter of course from that first conception of the destiny of Americans to be proclaimers of the good tidings of Jesus Christ to ignorant sinful heathen. The absolute interdependence of the highest patriotism and the intensest love for other peoples prompting to their evangelization has been the message of our nation to the world throughout our whole career. Christians sometimes say, ''I believe in Home Missions but not in Foreign,'' or ''I believe in Foreign but not Home Missions.'' Such people are only half Americans. Now Whitman was sent by the American Board as a foreign missionary. True, his work lay in what was then known as Oregon but that was outside of the acknowledged territory of the Republic. He added to our Union three great states. In him missionary fervor and patriotism, zeal that sent him to one of the ends of the world, and love of country as unselfish and profound as ever moved a citizen of any land on earth, were but parts of his loyalty to Jesus Christ. His career showed once and for all that Home Missions are just as much a part of Foreign Missions as Foreign are of Home. They are

chemical elements in the great compound of Christian love: separate either element by itself and the compound perishes. In the state capitol of Oregon a queer old printing press is sacredly preserved. It was the first press ever used in the district of Oregon, which comprises the present states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming. On it were printed portions of scripture and hymn books in the Nez Perces language by Whitman's associates. It was the heralder of the millions upon millions of books and newspapers that have gone and are still to issue from that vast territory. Where did it come from? In 1819 the machine took ship in Boston, journeyed round Cape Horn and finally landed in Hawaii where for twenty years it helped tell the story of Christ in the language of the Kanakas. But the Pacific Islanders had outgrown the tiny press and in 1839 the First Native Church of Honolulu presented it to the great region of Oregon. Next month the senators and representatives of those three noble states will meet in Washington and, let us trust, will help welcome little Hawaii into the Union as a gallant return for the gift made so generously fifty-eight years ago. Thus wondrously doth God weave His web of humankind to the music of His song "No man liveth unto himself." Thus doth He lead the people of this great Republic to be true to its mission, to give the gospel to the world, and on this day He doth turn

the mind of the nation to the hero who more than any other prominent American citizen proclaimed by his life the basal truth for which our Republic stands, that the greatest of all shall be servant of all.

When Dr. Whitman mounted his horse for his ride of 4000 miles he remarked "If the Board dismisses me, I will do what I can to save Oregon to the country. My life is of but little worth if I can save this country to the American people." His fellow missionaries at first opposed his leaving his mission field for patriotic purposes. His answer was "I am not expatriated by becoming a missionary." This was the spirit which animated him. Unlike Washington, Dr. Whitman was born poor and died poor. Unlike Lincoln he aspired to no office, sought no political position and gained none. What he did he did out of the purest love for his country, seeking no reward and never for a moment thinking of one. I do not know of greater disinterestedness in our history. He saw a vast opportunity for his nation, he quietly resolved to persuade his countrymen to sieze it, he gave up his chosen work for that purpose with the probability of discharge for neglect of duty, he braved the opprobrium of a discredited missionary, he held his life absolutely cheap for his country's sake, with a single companion, the courageous Lovejoy, he dared a journey which no one had ever dared before and no one will ever attempt again, and when all was over he

went simply back to his humdrum work and laid down his life for his Master. That is true patriotism, beside which the much puffed article exhibited by our public servants today is rank shoddy. Marcus Whitman was above all things a patriot.

Nay, more, he was a hero. Our girl elocutionists recite Paul Revere's ride and our school boy orators declaim Sheridan's Ride, but it needs a greater poet than we have yet produced to sing the heroism of Whitman's ride through trackless wilderness, among fighting savages and over wintry mountain ranges, wandering far from the trail in the terrible cold, left at last in a freezing snow storm to the intelligence of a faithful mule on whose God-given instinct the destinies of this great republic hung for a whole day, plunging boldly into the icy waters of the fierce Green river, lost all alone in the wilds of Colorado, standing friendless, clad in rough skins and with frost-bitten limbs in the presence of the nation's great men who scarce believed his story, commanding by his noble personality the faith of Congress, compelling a change in the diplomacy of the two greatest governments on earth, proving, what England had for decades denied, the possibility of an overland wagon route to Oregon, focussing the eyes of his countrymen on the wondrous Northwest with its exhaustless resources, animating them with such glorious enthusiasm that all over the land, where a few years before senators had been

exclaiming that they would not "give a pinch of snuff for all the territory beyond the Rockies," the shout went up "Fifty-four forty or fight," and finally leading to the grand result which added three of our most splendid states to the Union. A true hero is one who endures and triumphs. Marcus Whitman tried by this test stands second to no hero in our national existence.

But he was more—more than a pioneer, a missionary, a patriot and a hero. He was a man of destiny. God had a purpose for this land, a mighty plan of union. Here as nowhere on earth He is pleased to prove that "all ye are brethren." To do that, one great nation speaking one noble language must stretch from north to south from east to west in unbroken continuity, covering the part of North America most fertile and richest in the materials for producing wealth. Many foes were to menace the success of His plan. First the French with their dilettante language and their subservience to absolutism in politics and religion essayed the task. Like a great black cloud they hovered to the north till the south winds drowned them in the Banks of Newfoundland. But still athwart the very center of the continent from New Orleans clear up across the Dakotas stretched the Gallic province of Louisiana. France well knew its value. She never would have relinquished it if in God's time the dictator Napoleon,

incarnation of selfishness, had not arisen to power. One nation, only one, thwarted the ambition of *le grand Empereur* for universal rule in Europe. That nation was Great Britain. In a moment of jealous fear to spite Britain, Napoleon sold to the United States that priceless territory and made possible our American Union.

Next England, transcendent England, that matchless motherland whom to know is to love, whose future is so indissolubly bound with ours that its downfall would mean our downfall, England, blinded by its money getters, ignorant that in America's success lay the promise of her own coming greatness, laid her hand upon our boundlesss West-land. Had she succeeded in holding Oregon the Mexican war would have given California to British America, and the Southern Confederacy assured of English sympathy and aid would have split our union into two miserable petty nationalities, the scorn of all ages to come. By tacit understanding between England and our Republic, it had been agreed that Oregon should go to the country having there the largest number of settlers. The one aim of the British was to discourage American colonists. To accomplish this every device was practised. American fur companies were again and again driven out by the methods of the English Hudson's Bay Company. Emigrants reaching Fort Hall were told that wagons could not cross the mountains,

until a large assortment of prairie schooners and agricultural implements, abandoned by their scared owners, remained at the Fort to enforce the assertion. British periodicals teemed with articles decrying Oregon as a desert. So persistent were these efforts that the creed of every American statesman came to contain the article, that nothing but worthless territory stretched beyond the Rocky Mountains. Webster had determined to trade the region embracing the three states of Washington, Idaho and Oregon, whose taxable property today aggregates over $500,000,000 for the Newfoundland fisheries. In 1893 the fisheries of Washington state alone yielded over $900,000. The United States were hopelessly ignorant of Oregon and Britain was slowly sending her emigrants there to possess the land. A few days before Whitman set out on his ride he saw a young English priest throw up his hat and heard him shout "Hurrah for Oregon —America is too late, we have got the country." He learned that tidings had just arrived that 140 Englishmen and Canadians were on their way to help colonize for England. The region was already practically lost to us. Now why do we call Whitman a man of destiny? An American fur trader frozen out by the British, met Whitman's party on the road to Oregon in 1836, sized up its character and remarked to a friend "There is something that the Honorable Hudson Bay Company cannot drive out of Oregon." Whit-

man went in God's name with God's commission and he was inexpellable. Again possessed by a strange freak as all his party even his wife thought, but moved as we now know by God's loving prevision for America, Whitman at the expense of untold hard work and danger took his wagon clear into Oregon. More than once it stuck in river bottoms, twice in one day it upset, "It was a wonder," writes Mrs. Whitman, "that it was not turning somersaults continually;" how he got it up some of the steep places without help was always a marvel to pioneers. At Fort Hall the English captain tried every conceivable means to get him to abandon it, but no, on to Oregon it went. Seven years later, when Whitman stood before Webster, the great statesman clinched his argument with a majesterial sweep of the hand as he exclaimed, "Oregon is shut off by impassable mountains and a great desert which make a wagon road impossible." "Mr. Secretary," answered Whitman, "that is the grand mistake that has been made by listening to the enemies of American interests in Oregon. Six years ago I was told there was no wagon road to Oregon and it was impossible to take a wagon there, and yet in despite of pleadings and almost threats, I took a wagon over the road, and have it now." That wagon settled Webster. But how wrest Oregon from England? By a larger immigration of course. Whitman and Lovejoy went about it with all

their hearts. One thousand men, women and children with two hundred wagons, of which seventy-five wagons proved unequal to the journey, started out. They reached Fort Hall. There they met Capt. Grant. The doughty Englishman knew that if those one hundred and twenty-five wagons reached Oregon, America would win the day. He laid himself out to convince the travelers of the impossibility of crossing the mountains with wagons, showed them his assortment of prairie schooners and was just succeeding, when Whitman exclaimed, "Men, I have guided you thus far in safety. Believe nothing you hear about not being able to get your wagons through. I took a wagon to Oregon six years ago." That rickety old wagon again carried the day. They pushed on. The one hundred and twenty-five wagons reached Oregon. The thousand settlers flooded the states with glowing letters, a vast tide of pioneers pushed over the mountains, the whole country was aroused, the far Northwest was saved to the Republic and our Union lives today in unbroken strength. One man, farseeing, undaunted, unselfish, never asking one cent's reward for adding three hundred thousand square miles to his country's domains; one mule, leading three lost freezing men through a blinding blizzard to a smouldering camp fire in the shelter of a great rock; one wagon toilfully hauled through torrents, over quicksands and across mountains—upon

such trifles God hinges His vast purposes. Verily He chooseth the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and in the humblest He findeth His men of destiny.

After the stirring episode that aroused a nation, Whitman returned to his chosen field, to his missionary farm and saw mill where he taught lazy Indians to work, to his toilsome labors as a frontier physician, and to the slow but glorious task of blazing an entrance into darkened heathen souls for the golden light of the gospel. But he was a marked man. The Jesuits hated him because he was a Protestant, the English detested him because he had won America's battle, the Indians grew restive both because he wanted them to learn to work and because he brought so many settlers into their hunting grounds, and slowly these forces massing their power marked him for destruction. There is no need to tell you the story of that savage scene of slaughter, how on November 29, 1847, men whom he had befriended, those whom his skill had called back to life, some even whom he had led to Christ fell upon him and his friends and with details too sickening to recount, butchered fourteen out of the seventy persons in his generous missionary home. His life was a sacrifice to his patriotism and to his religion. He sealed his mission with a martyr's death.

And finally there were two of them. Martha

Washington we regard as a worthy companion of our national hero, but after all there was nothing especially preeminent in her life and character. While Lincoln's wife is not remembered for any remarkable virtues. But whenever Marcus Whitman's name is mentioned Narcissa Prentice Whitman's is implied. Her life was a beautiful poem. Lovely in person and character, owning a voice of matchless sweetness, utterly unselfish, brave as only a true woman can be, making no allusion in her diary to the terrors and trials of that long trip across the continent--and she a bride—with its deadly serpents, fierce insect pests, parching clouds of alkali dust, bloodthirsty Indians, weary stretches of mountain and desert, thrilling escapes from drought and famine and flood, she stands forth in the story of Whitman as an American Queen. Her darling companion, the only child whom God had given them, one of those beautiful angel natures whom even the Indian devotedly loved, falls into the rushing river and is drowned. "Lord! it is right; it is right. She is not mine, but thine;" writes this lonely mother, "she was only lent to me to comfort me for a little season, and now, dear Savior, Thou hast the best right to her. Thy will, not mine, be done." Bravely she bids her husband good-bye and speeds him on his long, long ride with her smiling, cheery farewell-face, and then goes into her house to take up her humdrum work of heroism without a murmur. Let-

ters reached Oregon in those days in two years time. Not a word, not a rumor breaks the stillness of those weary twelve months. The first tidings of her husband come with the beat of the horse's hoofs that bring her good man home again. Her motherly heart opens to take in eleven helpless children, left fatherless and motherless in that far off wilderness. She writes in her diary, "We have no less than seven families in our two houses; we are in peculiar and somewhat trying circumstances; we cannot sell to them because we are missionaries and not traders." With her household of seventy persons she knows the full meaning of the Bible injunction "Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"—only we don't hear of many angels in Oregon those days. Wherever she goes she shines a perpetual sunbeam. When the tomahawk ends her loved one's life, brave and true she stands to receive the fatal bullets of the cowardly assassins, and breathing a prayer for the orphaned children to whom she had been so faithful a mother, her soul goes forth to join the spirit of her husband. "Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they were not divided."

What shall we Americans do to honor this hero and heroine, to repay them for their gift of three hundred thousand square miles and for the priceless legacy of such noble living? Years after the martyrdom of 1847, Dr. Cushing Eells stood by

the deserted grave near Walla Walla and vowed to erect a monument to his friends Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. No stone graven by art and man's device, no stately column but a living, regnant institution alone could commemorate lives so brave and strong. Mr. Eells founded Whitman college and then America witnessed a friend's devotion as rare as it was touching. For thirty-four years he went up and down the land telling his thrilling story of Whitman's ride and begging his mite for Whitman College. He passed—the memorial seemed doomed when at last the country began to awake. If a gift of £800 and a few books could make Harvard University, if a merchant's generosity could start into full existence a Yale, what may not two such heroic lives do for the Whitman College of the future? If ideals rule the world of letters, that humble school on the banks of the Walla Walla River, born out of heroism, friendship and the gratitude of the greatest Republic of all time, must some day dwarf all our other royal institutions of learning. Rich in the memory of coming generations will be the men and the women whose self denial and generosity shall help make Whitman college what it should be—a worthy memorial of the twin souls that dared and suffered and did and died for God and their native land.